



News Release

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Service Approves Industry Conservation Plan for the American Burying Beetle *Plan Provides Industry with Streamlined ESA Permitting Process For Oklahoma Projects*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) approved a plan to streamline the Endangered Species Act (ESA) permitting process for oil and gas activities that may result in take of the American burying beetle (ABB) in Oklahoma. The approved Industry Conservation Plan (ICP) provides industry with a mechanism to move forward with oil and gas projects in ABB habitat during the 2014 and 2015 ABB active season.

The approved ICP covers take of the ABB that is incidental to activities associated with oil and gas exploration and the construction, operation, maintenance, repair and decommissioning of oil and gas pipelines and related well fields. It provides oil and gas operators the ability to proceed with projects in covered counties while conserving the American burying beetle and its habitat. The ICP will cover construction activities for two years and operations and maintenance activities will be covered for 20 years.

“The ICP ensures that there will be minimal impacts to the ABB as oil and gas activities continue in Oklahoma,” said Benjamin Tuggle, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “By working with the petroleum industry, we have initiated the ICP to enable oil and gas development to occur in the ABB’s range over the next two years, while minimizing incidental take of the species.”

The ICP will be in effect for two years and covers 45 Oklahoma counties including Adair, Atoka, Bryan, Carter, Cherokee, Choctaw, Cleveland, Coal, Craig, Creek, Delaware, Garvin, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, Kay, Latimer, Le Flore, Lincoln, Love, Marshall, Mayes, McClain, McCurtain, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee, Noble, Nowata, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Osage, Ottawa, Pawnee, Payne, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Pushmataha, Rogers, Seminole, Sequoyah, Tulsa, Wagoner, and Washington.

The Service listed the ABB as endangered in 1989. Once found throughout the eastern U.S., the ABB is currently known to exist in only eight States (South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts), which represents about five percent of its historically occupied range.

You may obtain copies of the final ICP and Environmental Assessment online at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Oklahoma/ABBICP>. For further information on how to obtain or

review copies of these documents, see the *Federal Register* notice at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/index.html>.

America's fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



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